Police Hit By Panel Probing S.U.

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An all-black committee investigating the deaths of two student demonstrators at Southern University in Baton Rouge today concluded "criminally negligent" law officers shot them down without provocation.

The 12-member committee concluded that the students involved in a police-student confrontation on the campus Nov. 16 behaved peacefully.

The committee released a long list of preliminary findings after conducting hearings in Baton Rouge for two days. The panel has no official status.

STATE ATTY. GEN. William Guste, who is heading an official inquiry into the deaths, said today his biracial investigative committee has interviewed more than 100 witnesses and plans to interview many more before making its final report.

The black committee announced its preliminary conclusions at a mid-morning news conference in Baton Rouge. D'Army Bailey, a Berkeley, Calif., city councilman who is co-chairman of the committee, said a more extensive written report will be issued within two weeks.

The students, Denver A. Smith of New Roads and Leonard Douglas Brown of Gilbert, both 20, were killed during a confrontation in front of the Southern administration building.

Bailey said the black committee was unanimous in its preliminary conclusions that:

—**"Students at Southern** University were orderly and peaceful in attempting to communicate with the university administration" on the day of the violence. Southern President Dr. G. Leon Netterville has said students occupied his office and refused to leave.

—**Students tried to** negotiate their differences with the administration sincerely, while the administration "acted in bad faith."

—**Police called to** the campus precipitated the tragedy by firing the first tear gas canister.

—**The students died of** gunshot

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wounds inflicted by sheriff's deputies.

—**"The sheriff of** East Baton Rouge Parish, Al Amiss, was emotionally and professionally ill-equipped to deal with the situation" and displayed "a clear and wanton disregard of human life."

—**Gov. Edwin W. Edwards** aggravated the situation by "making irresponsible public statements."

Among those questioned by his committee, Guste said, were Netterville and several of his top administrators. The committee interviewed sociology instructor Clarence Thornton, who was a witness to the confrontation, Guste said.

The attorney general announced the appointment of Sidney H. Cates III, a former New Orleans police official, and Sheriff Bailey Grant of Monroe to supervise preparations of a ballistics report.

"I believe these efforts will be very productive, and a clear picture of the events preceding th confrontation is being assembled," Guste said.

GUSTE HAS indicated his committee has had trouble getting student witnesses to testify. The rival black panel has lpenty of student witnesses but could not persuade police and university officials to testify.

GUSTE'S PANEL was formed at the request of Gov. Edwin Edwards to investigate the deaths Nov. 16 of the two 20-year-olds, Denver A. Smith of New Roads and Leonard Douglas Brown of Gilbert. That committee is operating behind closed doors.

Yesterday, at the black investigating committee's session, Army and Navy ROTC instructors who witnessed the student deaths characterized law officers at the scene as charging about, "acting as individuals, with no noticeable leadership."

Army Maj. Leon D. Jackson, an assistant professor of military science, said he had trouble persuading officers and university officials to call for aid for the two students — one dead, one dying on the pavement.

When he attempted to examine the students, he said, a state trooper told him: "You are not God. Leave those people here until the coroner gets here."

NAVY LT. CMDR. Howard Walton said he "saw a state policeman firing at the fleeing students," and "an object ricocheted off the naval science building" near where he stood.

Southern's Baton Rouge campus is closed until Jan. 3.

Southern University in New Orleans resumed classes yesterday but a student boycott remains virtually complete. Officials said fewer than 100 of SUNO's 2,700 students attended classes yesterday and there were very few students on the campus this morning.